The Character and Duty of Preachers, as Miniſters of CHRIST *and Stwards of the Myſteries of* GOD *delineated; and the Duty of People to receive and treat them as ſuch, inforced.*

IN A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT NORWICH, APRIL 2, 1784.

AT THE FURNEAL, OF THE

Rev. BENJAMIN LORD, D. D.

Who departed this LIFE, on the 31th Day of MARCH, 1784.

In the 90th YEAR of his AGE.

BY JAMES COGSWELL, A. M.
PASTOR of the CHURCH in the THIRD SOCIETY in WINDHAM.

My Father! My Father! PROPHET ELISHA.

For we preach not ourſelves but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus ſake.
ST. PAUL.

How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great Salvation? ST. PAUL.

NORWICH:
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BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT NORWICH, APRIL 2, 1784.

AT THE FUNERAL OF THE

REV. BENJAMIN LORD. D.D.

1 COR. iv. 1.

Let a man ſo account of us as of the miniſters of CHRIST, *and ſtewards of the myſteries of* GOD.

IT is undoubtedly a matter of unſpeakable importance how miniſters conduct in their ſacred character,—and what reception their people give to them; and to the goſpel diſpenſed by them.

ST. PAUL found himſelf obliged to blame the Corinthians (tho' he did it with reluctance) for their miſconduct in this regard; that they indulged angry diviſions and contentions with reſpect to miniſters:—that they gave ſome a very undue preference to others: that they were elated and puffed up with pride in theſe contentions, &c.

IN the cloſe of the former chapter he ſhews them how unſuitable, unreaſonable and ungrateful a practice this was; becauſe all miniſters, and all their varying gifts were deſigned and adapted for

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the good of the church, and were all the gift of God; and a legacy from Chriſt their Saviour. Conſequently they ſhould be thankful for all, but neither be proud of, nor deſpiſe any.

In our text the apoſtle deſcribes the character and duty of a preacher, and ſhews the light in which their people ſhould view them; and what their treatment of them ſhould be.

Upon this ſolemn and mournful occaſion it may be proper for us all, whether miniſters or hearers, to turn our thoughts to a ſubject of this nature; miniſters are put in mind by this providence that they muſt ſoon give an account of their ſtewardſhip; and hearers that they alſo muſt anſwer before an impartial and enlightned tribunal for the treatment which they have given to the miniſters and meſſages of Christ.

Let us then, firſt conſider the character of a preacher.

That which is given in the text is twofold, viz. that of a miniſter of Chriſt, and that of a ſteward of the myſteries of God. A miniſter has the ſame ſignification with a ſervant.

The preachers of the goſpel are in a peculiar ſenſe the ſervants of Chriſt. All creatures are in a ſenſe the ſervants of Chriſt.—He is the Creator and Lord of all things in heaven and earth. All profeſſing Chriſtians are under indiſpenſible obligations to be his ſervants; all real chriſtians are in fact ſo.

ſo. But the goſpel preacher is in a yet more appropiate ſenſe, the miniſter or ſervant of Chriſt. He is ſo by ſpecial deſignation. The diſpenſation of the glorious goſpel is committed to the miniſters of Chriſt. They are ſeparated to a ſpecial ſervice by an appointment from HEAVEN. They have a commiſſion from Chriſt, who has drawn a ſacred encloſure around their office, which it is daring preſumption for any to intrude or break in upon. For how ſhall they preach except they be ſent? Their work is aſſigned them by Chriſt who employs and maintains them, and to whom they are accountable.—They are indeed in a ſenſe the ſervants of the people too, but it is only under Chriſt, and for his ſake.

ANOTHER branch of the character of preachers is that of ſtewards, ſtewards of the myſteries of God; who are ſet over God's houſhold; under ſhepherds who are to feed the flock; giving every one his portion in due ſeaſon, and taking a faithful care of the diſcipline of God's-houſe. But this brings me,

II. To give a brief deſcription of the duty of preachers, as miniſters of Chriſt, and ſtewards of the myſteries of God. Every ſervant has his work aſſigned to him; the miniſters of Chriſt have work of the greateſt importance, which requires the utmoſt diligence and faithfulneſs.

THEIR great work conſiſts in preaching the everlaſting goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, and adminiſtring his ordinances. So their grand commiſſion runs, *preach the goſpel to all nations, teaching them to obſerve*

obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you.——And again, *Feed the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghoſt has made you overſeers*, Acts xx. 28. Yet again, in the xxiv. of Matt 45 our bleſſed Saviour ſays, *Who then is a faithful and wiſe ſervant whom his Lord hath made ruler over his houſhold, to give them meat in due ſeaſon?* This meat is doubtleſs no other than the wholeſome and precious doctrines of ſacred truth. St. Paul in our text ſtiles preachers, ſtewards of the myſteries of God; *viz.* the doctrines of the goſpel of Chriſt, which is the wiſdom of God in a myſtery; a ſyſtem of divine truths containing an inconceivably glorious diſpenſation of marvellous and aſtoniſhing grace. Hence that direction of St. Paul to Timothy, *Study to ſhew thyſelf approved to God, a workman that need not be aſhamed; rightly dividing the word of truth.* 2 Timothy ii. 15.

INDEED this is not the whole of the preachers work; he muſt comfort the people of God in their troubles;—viſit the widow and fatherleſs in their afflictions;—attend on funeral ſolemnities;—viſit, converſe and pray with the ſick in particular;—catechiſe and inſtruct children and youth;—and maintain a godly diſcipline.——But after all, the directions of the goſpel plainly ſhew that preaching of the goſpel and adminiſtring the ordinances thereof is his great main buſineſs.

III. THIS will bring us to ſay a few things concerning the manner in which the miniſterial office ſhould be diſcharged; and a good degree of wiſdom, with ſtrict fidelity are abſolutely neceſſary in the diſcharge of this all important truſt.——It

is required in ſtewards that a man be found faithful, are the next words to the text. And as faithfulneſs is of the very laſt importance, we muſt dwell ſome time upon it:

IT implies a diſpoſition to be faithful;—a love to God, to Chriſt; and to the ſouls of men. A diſpoſition to fidelity as the ruling temper of the mind is doubtleſs implied in being faithful; and this implies ſupreme love to God and Chriſt, as being infinitely amiable in their own proper character; as well as gratitude and devotion for the diſplays of divine love and grace.

THEY who have this love of God and his Son will be ſenſible of the exceeding precioufneſs of the ſouls of men, and greatly deſire their ſalvation. Hence, when Peter made that confeſſion to our Saviour, *Thou knoweſt that I love thee.* Chriſt ſaid to him, *Feed my ſheep*, &c. As it is neceſſary to faithfulneſs that a preacher have this diſpoſition, it follows, that it is of the utmoſt importance that he be regenerated; that he have a principle of holineſs as the governing bias of his heart; that he may be faithful to his maſter, to his truſt and to the ſouls of men. Agreeable hereto.

FAITHFULNESS implies that he aim chiefly and ultimately at the honour of God and Chriſt, and the ſalvation of men. Theſe all important objects muſt govern their deſigns, and influence their meaſures, or they will not be faithful. Corrupt and evil deſigns will be like the dead fly which ſpoils the choiceſt perfume; They will miſapply the

the moſt ſhining talents. If a preacher's aim in engaging in the miniſtry is either honour and preferment, or wordly gain, or luxury and eaſe, he will be very far from being faithful.

It is not indeed contrary but agreeable to his ſacred calling that he take care for a ſupport for himſelf, and his family; and that in ordinary caſes he inſiſt on a ſupport from the people among whom he labours. *He who provides not for his family is worſe than an infidel.*——It is impoſſible to attend to his great work as every faithful miniſter deſires to do, while embarraſſed with cares, and tired with fatigues of a temporal nature. But in the faithful miniſter, this prudent care for a ſupport is only in ſubordination to building up the intereſt of the Redeemer. He who makes any of the emoluments or enjoyments of this preſent life his main object in undertaking, or following the work of the miniſtry is totally unworthy of it; and will have a dreadful account to give to his great Lord hereafter.——The faithful miniſter takes the charge of his flock, not by conſtraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Further,

Faithfulness implies ſome good acquaintance with the word and mind of God, with the doctrines of religion, and the duties of the miniſterial calling. He that is not wiſe cannot be faithful, in this calling, for it is preſumption in him to meddle with it. A ſun without light is not a greater abſurdity than an ignorant miniſter.—If the blind lead the blind both will ſtumble and fall together.

together.——The firſt miniſters of Jeſus were furniſhed to their work immediately and miraculouſly; but his miniſters at this day muſt obtain their knowledge (under divine influence) by hard ſtudy, and diligent application. And therefore (as far as their circumſtances will admit) devote themſelves to their ſacred employment. *Give thyſelf wholly to theſe things*, is the command.

And they muſt fully preach the goſpel, and not ſhun to deliver the whole counſel of God. The faithful miniſter will not content himſelf with a narrow plan; a contracted circle of preaching.—He will endeavour to accquaint the people of his charge, with the doctrines concerning God, Chriſt and ſalvation; concerning converſion, faith and holineſs, concerning the duties of piety, and morality, in their extent and importance and he will reprove, rebuke and exhort; with all long-ſuffering and doctrine. The faithful miniſter muſt not, will not be a time-ſerver. He muſt fear neither the frowns of the great, nor the revilings of the cenſorious; for if he thus pleaſes men, he cannot be the ſervant of Chriſt,

The preacher muſt be careful that he preach nothing but the goſpel, nothing contrary to the form of ſound words; that he does not teach for doctrines either the commandments or inventions of men.——As Chriſt is his maſter, ſo the word of Chriſt is his charter and his rule.

Infinite damage has been done to religion, by men's publiſhing their own inventions inſtead of

the goſpel; the faithful miniſter will therefore endeavour to ſpeak as *becomes the oracles of God*. His motto is, *to the law and to the teſtimony*.

FAITHFULNESS implies impartiality and integrity; this property is very eſſential to the character of a miniſter; a partial bias will render a miniſter unfaithful both in the deſk and in matters of diſcipline. Hence the ſolemn charge of St. Paul to Timothy 1 Tim. v. 21. *I charge thee before the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the elect angels, that thou obſerve theſe things without prefering one before another, doing nothing by partiality*. As miniſters they muſt *know no man after the fleſh*; as true ſons of Levi, they muſt ſay to their father and their mother I have not ſeen them. Neither ſhould they know their own brethren, or acknowledge their children, Deut. xxxiii. 9. they muſt not be partial to the neareſt relations of life; that they may obſerve God's word and keep his commandments. Again, preachers muſt be meek humble and patient in imitation of their great Lord and Maſter. It becomes the ſervants of Chriſt to be Chriſt like. *They muſt not ſtrive but be gentle towards all men, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe who oppoſe themſelves*: and willing to deny themſelves for the good of ſouls. Once more,

IT is very evident that they muſt be very diligent and even indefatigable or they cannot be faithful; a life of indolence and eaſe is very contrary to the character of a miniſter of Chriſt. They muſt be inſtant, labour as well as ſtudy to ſhew themſelves to God, and be unwearied in their efforts. To do

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the work of the Lord negligently is to do it deceitfully. If the ſervant ſleep the enemy will ſow tares. And in as much as fleſh world and devil are (as one ſays) joined in a curſed confederacy to oppoſe their work and hinder their ſerving the intereſt of Chriſt. It is abſolutely neceſſary that they be unwearied; not diſcouraged by the moſt ſtrenuous and formidable oppoſition, but that they perſevere and be faithful unto the death.

II. The ſecond particular, though of very great importance muſt be treated with the utmoſt brevity. That wiſdom which dwells with prudence, and is profitable to direct, would prompt and enable them to ſet ſuch an example to their flocks as not to diſhonour, but recommend religion: it would influence and direct them to keep at the greateſt diſtance from all immorality;—to ſhun every thing mean and ſervile or which ſavoured of flattery, on the one hand, or which flowed from or looked like pride, and haughtineſs on the other. Prudence would direct to a ſuitable treatment of men, what familiarity, what condeſcenſion, or what reproof and ſeverity would be well timed and neceſſary: it would direct them to a proper choice of ſubjects and a ſuitable management of them ſo as to be adapted to do the moſt good; and to temper their zeal, which may either be a means of great good, or of much miſchief; according as it is directed, tempered and managed.—Theſe topics might be much enlarged upon, but it is time to proceed to the laſt thing, *viz.* to ſhew.

IV.

IV. How people ſhould receive, and what treatment they ſhould give to miniſters and the meſſages which they bring to them. As this is a ſeaſon which peculiarly calls for your attention on a ſubject of this nature, you will ſuffer me (my brethren) to enlarge upon it, and to deſire as we go along that you would carefully examine under each head, every one for himſelf, what has been your temper, and conduct in this regard.

I. People ſhould guard againſt an improper and inordinate regard to and eſteem of their miniſters. There has ſometimes been danger of this extreme: arrogant eccleſiaſtics have ſometimes ſet up their own dogmas as the oracles of truth; and have ſeemed as if they expected that whatever they delivered, or wrote, ſhould be received with tame ſubmiſſion; and wherever people receive for truth whatever is delivered from the deſk without diſtinction it argues an unmanly and an unchriſtian ſervility. It is contrary to the ſubmiſſion which we owe to Chriſt, who has expreſly charged us to *call no man maſter, becauſe one is our maſter even Chriſt.* Thoſe who practiſe in this manner do not treat preachers as Chriſt's miniſters, but as lords of their faith. But, perhaps enough has been ſaid under this particular head, as this is not a general failing at this day. I proceed to ſay,

II. If people would comply with the apoſtolical command in the text, they ſhould be careful of making an unſuitable and partial diſtinction between miniſters, and of ſetting up one above another, ſo as to overvalue ſome, and undervalue others.

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There is a great variety in the endowments and acquirements, the gifts and graces of the miniſters of Chriſt; thus it was in the apoſtles day, and thus it is at this time. St. Paul was a man of deep penetration, cloſe reaſoning, attended with great energy and ſublimity; but he had a mean perſonal appearance, nor was he eloquent. Apollos was eminent for oratory, maſter of the powers of elocution, and arts of addreſs. Peter was remarkable for his plain and affectionate addreſs, and could condeſcend to the methods of eaſy and familiar inſtruction; by theſe qualifications he was peculiarly fitted to feed the lambs of the flock. All theſe gifts were valuable, and of great uſe in the church of Chriſt, and ſhould have been valued and improved according to their reſpective worth.

But the Corinthians made them the occaſion of emulation and contention: they fell into parties, and fomented dangerous diviſions. They who admired Paul deſpiſed Cephas and Apollos, and thoſe who were for Apollos dared to contemn even Paul, their ſpiritual father; becauſe he had not the powerful eloquence and plain warm addreſs of Apollos and Cephas; while the infidels and falſe teachers were pleaſed, becauſe they plainly perceived that theſe diſſentions and unchriſtian alienations greatly tended to the diſadvantage of the chriſtian cauſe. And the caſe will be the ſame wherever the great and important truths of the goſpel ſhall be deſpiſed and the miniſters of the goſpel ſlighted, becauſe they are not maſters of the fineſt addreſs; or do not chooſe to make uſe of the excellency of ſpeech, and ornaments of rhetoric: or have not all

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the airs and geſtures of the ſtage. Thoſe who deſpiſe the preacher for the want of theſe when he comes to them with the meſſages of divine truth, and delivers the whole counſel of God, ſhew that they are poor judges of good preaching. They prize that higheſt which is leaſt valuable; and when they contend and run into parties on this account, and are puffed up for one, againſt another; verily, they are carnal and walk as men.

And if this is contrary to the duty which we owe to the goſpel miniſtry, much more ſo is ſuch a temper as inclines perſons to deſpiſe thoſe things which are really valuable, and prefer thoſe that are either wrong, trifling, or contemptible: and to found a preference for preachers on ſuch a falſe taſte. Thus when miniſters are diſliked for their care and diligence in compoſing and writing their diſcourſes, while the moſt empty, unconnected, unimportant traſh delivered extempore is preferred to the beſt diſcourſes which are ſtudied and wrote: or where people are diſguſted with their miniſters for being faithful in reproving their vices, and plainly pointing out to them the danger of continuing in a ſtate of impenitence; and are better pleaſed with ſuch as daub with untempered mortar, who ſow pillows under their arms, and tell them they *ſhall not ſurely die*. That let miniſters or the ſcriptures threaten ever ſo hard, they ſhall not be puniſhed *with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and the glory of his power*.

Or, when people leave their ſtated preachers thro' an itch after novelty. It is the duty of perſons to attend

attend ſteadily on the adminiſtrations of thoſe miniſters of Chriſt where providence has caſt their lot; moſt certainly then it is directly contrary to that regard which thoſe who enjoy the goſpel owe to the goſpel miniſtry, to leave their ſtated places of worſhip from one of the moſt vain and trifling tempers in the world, viz. *that of idle curioſity*. The great deſign of the goſpel miniſtry is ſurely not to gratify our curioſity; but to better our hearts and ſave our ſouls. If we have a thirſt for ſacred knowlege in order to be transformed into the divine image, it is a noble curioſity; but (as one ſays) if our deſire is only after novelty, that we may pleaſe a roving fancy, and gratify a giddy and wandering imagination, the hearing novels, or romances would anſwer the end as well as hearing ſermons.

III. BUT I proceed to obſerve that in accounting their teachers as miniſters of Chriſt and ſtewards of the myſteries of God is implied that they eſteem and love them for the ſake of their office; and that they love and eſteem them the more by how much the more wiſe and faithful they are in the diſcharge of their duty as miniſters.

THE office of the goſpel miniſter is very important and no leſs beneficial to mankind. God has bleſſed the miniſtry of the word for the ſalvation of many millions of ſouls, one of which is worth more than the whole world. For it has pleaſed God by the preaching of the goſpel, by that which fooliſh men have called the fooliſhneſs of preaching, to ſave them that believe. St. Paul aſſures us that the preaching of the goſpel is the ordinary ſtanding means of

ſalvation

ſalvation in ſuch a ſenſe as that thoſe who deſpiſe or neglect it, cannot expect to obtain ſalvation. And therefore ſhews how reaſonable it was that preachers ſhould be *highly eſteemed in love for their works ſake*, 1 Theſſ. v. 13. And the more wiſe and faithful miniſters are, they are certainly entitled to ſo much the higher eſteem. Theſe are the great qualifications which people ſhould look at in a preacher; thoſe which the great Redeemer mentions as comprehenſive of the whole furniture of a preacher; *Who than is a faithful and wiſe ſervant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his houſehold?* Matt. xxiv. 45.

IV. To give them a comfortable and decent ſupport is implied in accounting them ſervants of Chriſt, &c. We obſerved before that the preacher who has no higher views than a ſupport is wholly unfit for the ſacred office. But that people who are unwilling to ſupport their miniſter do not treat him as a ſervant of Chriſt. When Chriſt ſent forth his diſciples to preach, he charged them to take nothing for their journey; and gives this reaſon for this charge, *The labourer is worthy of his hire.* And St. Paul aſſures us that it was the ſtanding ordinance of heaven that they who preach the goſpel ſhould live of the goſpel. But this brings us to obſerve,

V. That if a people would account their preachers as miniſters of Chriſt, and ſtewards of the myſteries of God, they muſt ſteadily, decently and devoutly attend on their adminiſtrations. This is a natural inference from the work of the miniſters of Chriſt; and the manner in which they are commanded

manded to discharge their office. Can it ever be supposed that God would appoint such an order of men, and so particularly point out those special and distinguishing qualifications as absolutely necessary to the right discharge of their office, and charge them on pain of his awful displeasure to devote themselves to their work; to pray, study, labour and strive to perform their duty with all good fidelity, and yet that the people should not be obliged steadily to hear them. When Christ says, *Go teach all nations; preach the gospel to every creature*; how strongly does it imply the obligations which lie on every human being to hear the gospel preached? When St. Paul says, *Preach the word, be instant in season out of season*, does it not imply that people are obliged to attend occasional opportunities of worship? But further,

God very expressly commands all those who enjoy the means of grace to attend on the preaching the gospel. *Forsake not the assembling yourselves together*, is an express command extending to every part, and every age of the church.——— When Christ sent forth his disciples to preach the gospel, his words are very remarkable, they are recorded in the x. of Luke, at the 16 verse. *He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.* In a word if ministers are servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God, they are ambassadors of the King of Heaven; they are no other than the messengers of the Lord of Hosts: they come in his name, and upon his errand; and if people will not attend on their ministry when they act in character, and honour their

office, they do in effect deſpiſe and turn away from Chriſt himſelf. And *how ſhall we eſcape if we turn away from him that ſpeaketh from heaven?* Heb. xii. 25. And then unneceſſarily neglecting public worſhip once, is in a degree chargeable with the awful crime of deſpiſing the Son of God. How careful then ſhould we be to prize and attend on the means of grace? How criminal is a ſtated neglect of public worſhip? But further,

THE nature and deſign of the miniſteral office moſt clearly evinces the propriety and importance of people's attending on worſhip, not only conſtantly, but ſeaſonably, decently and devoutly. There is exactly the ſame reaſon for attending on all parts of worſhip as on any one part: And the ſame reaſon for attending carefully, ſeriouſly, decently and devoutely, as for attending at all. If people come to the houſe of God under a pretence of worſhip; but in reality either to ſleep, or play, is it not an affront, I will not ſay, to their miniſters, but to him whoſe ſervants they are? And may it not juſtly be ſaid to ſuch perſons, What! have ye not houſes to ſleep or be merry in; or deſpiſe ye the church and houſe of God? I have inſiſted the longer on this head, becauſe of the growing, faſhionable neglect of public worſhip in many places, and it is a mournful truth, that criminal and inexcuſeable as the practice is, it prevails moſt in populous and polite places. But,

VI. THE laſt thing which I ſhall mention as implied in people's accounting their preachers as miniſters of Chriſt, &c. Is that they receive the goſpel; *i. e.* that they accept thoſe offers and yield obedience to thoſe requiſitions which are contained in the goſpel.

pel. The goſpel miniſter bears the ſame character in this reſpect, as the prieſts did under the Moſaic inſtitution; what this was, the prophet Malachi informs us, in the ſecond chapter and 7th v. of his propheſy: *For the prieſts lips ſhould keep knowledge, and they ſhould ſeek the law at his mouth: for he is the meſſenger of the Lord of Hoſts.* Miniſters are intruſted with a moſt intereſting embaſſy from God and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, 2 Cor. v. 20. *Now then we are ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us; we pray you in Chriſt ſtead be ye reconciled to God.* From hence it follows, that they, and they only, who embrace the goſpel, comply with the great deſign of the goſpel miniſtry: they who exerciſe repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who yield themſelves to God as thoſe who are alive from the dead; who receive with meekneſs the ingrafted word, which is able to ſave their ſouls; and are living a life of repentance, faith, love and new obedience. Theſe anſwer the grand and noble deſign of the goſpel miniſtry. They who deal kindly and truely with their maſter, treat them as Chriſts ſervants, and rejoice their hearts, and ſhall be for their crown and joy in the day of Chriſt.

SEVERAL other particulars might be mentioned with propriety, as that hearers ſhould bear with the infirmities of their miniſters, knowing that they are frail and imperfect men.——That they ſhould pray frequently and fervently for them, ſenſible that they are not of themſelves ſufficient for their work, but that all their ſufficiency is of God. But I fear I have already treſpaſſed upon your patience, and muſt therefore proceed to an improvement of the ſubject. And, IM-

IMPROVEMENT.

I. FROM what has been ſaid we may infer that well to execute the office of the goſpel miniſtry is a very valuable, deſireable, important and difficult work. This appears from the foregoing diſcourſe. The objects of its appointment, *viz.*

THE glory of God, the honour of the Redeemer and the ſalvation of ſouls; ſhew evidently that it is an employment of all others the moſt important, and how invaluable are the benefits which have already flowed to mankind from this ſacred office? How many millions of immortal beings have by the preaching of the goſpel been turned from darkneſs to light, and from the power of ſatan to God; and are now in the world of glory, praiſing God for the goſpel? Theſe things with many others which might be obſerved, certainly prove that the employment of a goſpel miniſter is of all employments the moſt valuable and important. Conſequently it is tho' not a gainful, yet a very deſireable work. *He that deſireth the office of a biſhop* (ſays St Paul) *deſireth a good work.* How delightful is the employment to meditate on divine truth, to converſe with the Father of our ſpirits and the Redeemer of our ſouls?—— To contemplate on that illuſtrious perſonage *who is the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?* To ſerve ſo good a maſter, to preach the unſearchable riches of Chriſt, and proclaim the glad tidings of ſalvation? This is doubtleſs one of the moſt agreeable employments.

But it is a calling attended with many difficulties, ſome of which are inſeperable from it, and others

others often attend it. It always requires much ſtudy, care and labour, which are wearineſs to the fleſh, exhauſting to the animal ſpirits, and often waſte away the lamp of life. Many are the difficulties ariſing from their own imperfections: many from the careleſſneſs, or wickedneſs, or frowardneſs of their people. Rightly to divide the word of truth is no eaſy taſk. While we preach the terrors of the Lord to the hardened ſinner, or endeavour to mark out the hypocrite, the ſelf diffident humble dejected ſaint is apt to take it to himſelf, and be diſcouraged: and if we comfort the feeble minded, the unhallowed ſelf conceited hypocrite is in great danger of miſapplication, and of bolſtering himſelf up with a falſe hope.——Some (as one ſays) are too knowing to be taught: others too proud to be reproved. Many are diſpoſed to carp cavil and to look on miniſters with a jealous eye, and magnify every failing; ſome make difficulty by a narrow contracted or bigotted temper and conduct; others have itching ears, and are ready to follow every *ignis fatuus*, who will pleaſe their fancy, or flatter them that they ſhall have peace though they live and die impenitent. Theſe with many other difficulties evidently ſhew that people ſhould rather pity than envy their miniſters: that they ſhould pray frequently and earneſtly for them: and in every proper way, but above all others, by an entire ſubjection to Chriſt, and obedience to his goſpel, make their work eaſy and delightful to them.

II. From what has been ſaid, we my infer that it is a matter of the utmoſt moment that miniſters frequently and impartially inquire how they have diſcharged their truſt; and of equal concern, that

their

their people examine faithfully what reception they have given to the goſpel miniſtry. Nothing can be more evident than this.——If we conſider the ſolemn charge which miniſters have received, the difficulty of a right diſcharge of their duty, the tremendous doom of unfaithful miniſters, and the glorious rewards of thoſe who are faithful; all theſe things ſpeak the importance of ſuch an enquiry to them. And,

IF we conſider alſo, the precious advantages enjoyed under the goſpel miniſtry, the ſolemn exhortations which God frequently gives to attend thereon, and give ſuitable treatment thereto. The expreſs declarations of the divine Redeemer that he will reſent the treatment given to his meſſengers acting in his name, and by his commiſſion; as though it had been given to himſelf. If we attend to the glorious promiſes made to a compliance with the offers of grace, and terms of ſalvation exhibited by his miniſters. And the dreadful conſequences of neglecting the goſpel ſalvation, and receiving the grace of God in vain. Theſe things fully evince the inconceiveable importance of examining what treatment we have given heretofore, and are now giving to the goſpel miniſtry.

ESPECIALLY when death makes a ſeperation between a people and their miniſter, is this enquiry ſeaſonable and important to the people who have ſat under his miniſtry and the miniſters who ſurvive him?

THAT time, (my dear hearers) is now arrrived. The mournful happy day, which we have been long

long expecting; mournful for us, but happy, inconceivably happy, for that venerable and very aged ſervant of God, and miniſter of Chriſt; that *faithful and wiſe ſteward of the myſteries of God*, whoſe funeral ſolemnities we are now attending.

HIS character has been already given in that deſcription of the wiſe aud faithful ſervant of Chriſt, which we have endeavoured briefly to delineate in the foregoing part of this diſcourſe. (I could heartily wiſh it had been done by a more ſkilful hand.) But it will be proper to hint at a few things more, particularly in the character of ſo eminent a ſervant of Chriſt, whoſe praiſe has for ſo many years been in all the churches.

HIS talents were far from contemptible, or inferior, or his acquirements deficient in various branches of ſcience or departments of employment. ——But his peculiar excellence appeared in his diſcharging the duties of his proper calling. To this, to the miniſtry of the goſpel of Chriſt, he bent his early ſtudies, to this ſacred employment, he devoted himſelf in his youthful days, and it was even then, not his taſk but his delight.—With remarkable aſſiduity and ſucceſs he followed the advice and direction of St. Paul to his ſon Timothy; He gave attendance to reading,—to exhortation,—to doctrine.—He meditated on the great truths of the goſpel, and was wholly in them, and his profitting evidently appeared both to his brethren and his people.—He was indeed, *a workman who needed not be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

HE was maſter of a well digeſted ſyſtem of divi-

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nity, was found in the faith, an able textuarian; and had a remarkable and excellent talent of comparing ſcripture with ſcripture; *i. e.* of expounding particular texts according to the general analogy of the ſacred canon. Herein he carefully followed St. Paul's direction, viz. *To hold faſt the form of ſound words in faith and love.*

His ſermons did not conſiſt of empty flouriſhes, or thin uſeleſs ſpeculations, but were well ſtudied, containing ſolid ſenſe and important truth; in a word, they were *ſound ſpeech which could not be condemned:* of the right evangelical ſtamp, well adapted to arouſe the ſecure, detect the inſincere, direct the inquiring, enlighten the ignorant, comfort the deſponding, and build up all the faithful.

In the ſacred deſk, he ſhone with diſtinguiſhed luſtre. His deportment was graceful, his voice pleaſant, his delivery natural and eaſy, his diſcourſes plain, pungent, and very edifying. He was zealous devout, animating, affecting, being evidently affected himſelf with the important truths which he delivered to others; of conſequence had an admirable talent of gaining and even commanding the attention of an auditory.

In prayer he was not leſs (perhaps more) eminent than in preaching: he was exceedinlyg devout, ſolemn, copious and pertinent. He poſſeſſed a remarkable and very natural talent of adapting the language of ſacred ſcripture to every caſe and circumſtance; was never at a loſs, but ſeemed to have an inexhauſtible fund of proper words, pointed ſenſe, and devout affections; ſo that upon the whole it was impoſſible

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for perſons to go away from an attendance on his miniſtrations without being inſtructed and edified; if they were not criminally remiſs and negligent, unreaſonably prejudiced, or obſtinately perverſe and ſtubborn.

And he was no leſs faithful and ſkilful, in other departments of his miniſterial calling.—He was an example to the believer, in word and converſation, in charity, in ſpirit, in faith, in purity. His converſation was in every part of it well adapted to render his preaching ſucceſsful, and to promote the cauſe of Chriſt; grave, inſtructive, pleaſant, but without any mixture of levity; it gained attention and commanded reſpect. He was very aſſiduous in viſiting the ſick and afflicted; a Barnabas to the dejected and feeble minded; and very ſkilful in diſcriminating characters, making proper applications, and giving ſuitable advice in ſoul troubles. And,

He was beloved and honoured by his people.

For many years together in the firſt period of his miniſtry, he was univerſally not only beloved but admired, by his flock, the whole town, and the neighbouring congregations.—And even when a ſpirit of enthuſiaſm, and diviſion ſo lamentably prevailed, and a number ſeparated from his miniſtry, few I believe, very few, dared to cenſure him as an unconverted, unfaithful or an unſkilful miniſter.

As he was a faithful we have reaſon to believe that he was in many inſtances a ſucceſsful miniſter. I doubt not there are many ſaints ſome of them eminently ſo, now in glory, who have bid a joyful welcome to their ſpiritual father, into the abodes of everlaſting reſt and happineſs.——And I truſt ſome, indeed I would hope not a few, are now living to whom he might ſay, *the ſeal of mine apoſtleſhip are ye in the Lord.*

How faithfully and tenderly he diſcharged the duties of a huſband and a parent his mourning widow and ſurviving children, are witneſſes.

He was long a faithful patron of learning in diſcharging the important truſt of an overſeer, as a member of the board of Corporation to the only public ſeminary of academical learning in this ſtate.

And the miniſters and churches eſpecially in the vicinity are witneſſes with what pious and faithful care he watched over their ſpiritual intereſt, and how inſtructing and edifying to great numbers his printed works have been. And upon the whole I believe it may be juſtly ſaid that few miniſters, in this ſtate, or I will add any other, have been more uſeful to the churches, or more inſtrumental in building up the Redeemer's kingdom than he.

He was viſited with many, and ſome of them ſignal and very trying afflictions which he bore with chriſtian fortitude, humility and ſubmiſſion. Eſpecially and eminently did this temper appear, as I am informed, by the beſt Judges who were near and with him in his laſt ſickneſs; and at laſt he quietly fell aſleep, in full reliance on the merits and promiſe of his Saviour, that he ſhould *enter into the joy of his Lord.*

It is a happpineſs which his people have to rejoice in and be thankful for, that as he lived to be very aged, ſo that he brought forth fruit even in old age. His reaſoning powers were little impaired, and his meekneſs humility, condeſcenſion, philanthropy and heavenly mindedneſs apparantly increaſed; and he ſeemed (to me at leſt) to

Stand with his ſtarry pinions on,
Dreſt for the flight, and ready to be gone.

and gone he is, (we have good reaſon to believe) to receive the rewards of his long and faithful ſervice, in the miniſtry of his Lord. *I have*

I have time left only for a brief addreſs to the widow and children of the deceaſed. To my brethren, in the miniſtry. To the church and congregation in this place, and to the aſſembly.

I. To the mourning and bereaved widow and children and grand children,

Honoured Madam, and dear Friends,

NOTWITHSTANDING your huſband, and your father, has lived to a very great and good age and is now fallen into the grave, as a ſhock of corn fully ripe; ſtill I doubt not, you tenderly mourn his loſs: and you have reaſon for it. His pious, faithful, kind counſels, his fervent prayers you will miſs, theſe you will long feel the need of. The breach is wide, and the vacuity will be great. The unwearied aſſiduity and tender care, with which you have, as it were, nurſed his ſecond childhood, and made his old age comfortable, demonſtrate that affection which muſt make a parting ſtroke painful. But you will remember, that by how much greater your loſs is, his gain is ſo much the greater. All your grief muſt terminate in yourſelves; for him you do not, cannot mourn. Will you be ſorry that he is gone to heaven; that he is entered into the joy of his Lord? Will you mourn that he is delivered from all the infirmities and diſtreſſes of this vain and ſinful life; that he ſhines as a ſtar of the firſt magnitude in the firmament of the church triumphant? Rather rejoice that he is gone before, and that he is in the pure realms of peace and love, waiting your arrival. O get ready, to follow, to that happy world where *light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart.* And if by the grace of God you are in this happy ſtate, this bleſſed readineſs to depart and be with Chriſt,

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which is beſt of all. Tho' the ties of nature, and and the bonds of friendſhip at preſent draw forth your tears, remember the time of ſeparation will be ſhort; after a few years, you will arrive to that happy world where *all tears ſhall be wiped away from your eyes.* May you dear Madam, be rewarded for all your faithful, kind care of, and love to your worthy conſort, by the gracious ſupport and comforting preſence of that merciful God, who has ſaid, *Let your widows truſt in me; for your Maker is your huſband, the Lord of Hoſts is his name.*

May the dear children and grand children alſo betake themſelves in this day of affliction to him who is the Father of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of angels and men; the Father of mercies, and who with infinite condeſcenſion and tenderneſs, has ſtiled himſelf the Father of the fatherleſs, may he be your God and father and portion in this world and your eternal friend.

I ſhall now briefly addreſs myſelf to my brethren in the miniſtry,

Reverend Sirs,

Since God in his providence has called me to perform this ſervice, unworthy as I am, you will bear with a few words of friendly advice, wherein I am not vain enough to aſſume the part of an inſtructor, but ſhall endeavour to remind you and myſelf of ſome few things proper for our contemplation and improvement on this ſolemn occaſion.

While we are come to mingle our tears with the family and flock of our venerable father, and are ready to exclaim with the prophet, *Our father! our father, the chariot of Iſrael, and the horſemen therof!* We alſo are admoniſhed that we muſt ſhortly put off theſe tabernacles of fleſh. Doubtleſs we muſt ſoon give an account of our ſtewardſhip; ſhould we live to the age of this venerable elder (which we

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can have no reaſon to expect) how ſoon will the time be elapſed? Should we arrive to fourſcore, or even fourſcore and ten years, ſtill the obſervation of the pſalmiſt holds good; *ſoon it is gone, and we fly away, Our fathers where are they? And do the prophets live for ever?* Are not the heads of ſome of us marked for the grave? Grey hairs are not only here and there upon us, but we are covered with them.——Certainly then it becomes us frequently and faithfully to call ourſelves to an account whether we have been faithful ſtewards of the manifold grace of God; whether we are ready to give up our account. In the words immediately following our text, St. Paul obſerves, it is required in ſtewards *that a man be found faithful*: and the preſent ſtate of religion among us loudly calls for faithfulneſs, and every effort of which we are capable in the cauſe of our divine maſter.—If we conſider how faſt religion declines,—with what haſty and dangerous ſtrides infidelity and impiety and every ſpecies of irreligion, profaneneſs and wickedneſs are advancing againſt us; the pernicious errors which are propagated and have been ſpreading among us; miſunderſtandings among ourſelves, which are not yet ſo thoroughly healed as they ought to be. If we conſider further how many faithful labourers are called off from their work.——How many congregations deſtitute of miniſters and too many of them contentedly ſo. How many more vacancies than candidates.—My brethren when we turn our attention to theſe facts have we not reaſon to fear what is coming on theſe favoured churches, which have been lifted up to heaven, by the enjoyment both of civil privileges and religious advantages, and almoſt miraculouſly reſcued from total ruin; ſhould we not pray continually in the language of the prophet;

O Lord

O Lord by whom ſhall Jacob ariſe, for he is but ſmall, or rather as our bleſſed Lord has taught us, pray that he *who is the lord of the harveſt would thruſt forth labourers into his harveſt.* Should we not be ſtimulated to gird up the loins of our minds, and double our diligence in our maſters work; may we all dread, and finally avoid the tremenduous doom of unfaithful ſervants: may we all be animated to fidelity and diligence in our ſtewardſhip by the gracious promiſe of our divine Redeemer; *Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* But,

It is now high time to addreſs a few words to this reſpectable church and congregation.

Honoured reverend and beloved,

You have enjoyed a ſingular favour in ſitting ſo long under the miniſtry of ſo able and faithful a paſtor. You have great reaſon to be thankful that God continued him ſo long, and made him ſo rich a bleſſing to you.——And that God gave him ſtrength and inclination to pray with you and preach to you to ſo good acceptance and purpoſe almoſt to the end of life, that he brought forth much fruit even in old age.

And you have ſingular reaſon of thankfulneſs that when God has taken him from you, you are not left (as many other congregations have been and now are) as ſheep without a ſhepherd. That God put it into your hearts and the heart of your aged paſtor, whoſe thoughts were continually labouring for your good to ſettle a fellow labourer with him; and that he has ſent to you a man of God, to break the bread of life to you, in whom you have reaſon to be, and are ſo well ſatisfied, and have reaſon to hope that he will fill up the vacancy and ſupply the place of his venerable colleague and father. *Thus hath*

hath God been the repairer of your breaches, and the reſtorer of paths to dwell in. Bleſſed be his holy name. O that God may direct and enable you to receive the word from his lips. May you ſtill manifeſt that regard to the word, worſhip and miniſters of Chriſt, for which many of you have, and do ſtill deſerve commendation; would to God that it might be juſtly ſaid of you all. And may the preſent remaining *paſtor* of this church emulate and imitate the virtues both of his *deceaſed* and *living* father. May you dear ſir, (as it were) catch inſpiration from the falling mantle of the venerable aſcending prophet; may you inherit a double portion of his ſpirit; may you long be that faithful wiſe and ſucceſsful miniſter which he was, and when diſmiſed from your labours meet him with a joyful welcome, in the realms of bliſs and glory above.

I ſhall conclude with a few words to the aſſembly.

My friends,

You are this day met to attend the funeral ſolemnities of one who hath long been a miniſter of Chriſt and a ſteward of the myſteries of God. Of a precious ſervant of Chriſt, who has through his whole life been labouring for the good of immortal ſouls; and has now received his reward. Here we behold the end of all fleſh! the longeſt life comes to a period.

" The tall the wiſe the reverend head,
" Muſt lie as low as ours." Doctor Watts.

The time will very ſhortly come when you muſt be called to anſwer before the enlightened tribunal of the great judge of mankind, what treatment you have given to the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt; in what manner you have received his miniſters, and the meſſages which they have brought to you from the Lord of Hoſts. Have you given them a

cordial

cordial reception, or treated them with neglect or contempt? Great is the ſlight which is thrown on the miniſters of Chriſt, the goſpel of Chriſt, and Chriſt himſelf by many at this day. And though it is, and ought to be a ſmall thing ſo far as it only reſpects themſelves, to be judged by man's judgement, yet for Zions ſake they muſt not hold their peace. For your own ſakes then, and not for ours we entreat you to aſk yourſelves how you have accounted of the miniſters of Chriſt, and the ſtewards of the myſteries of God? Have not many of you been deaf to the calls to repentance, and the meſſages of grace which they have brought to you? Have you not ſtopped your ears even to the voice of that divine charmer; which loudly ſpeaks to you in the words and in the wounds of a bleeding, crucified, and now exalted Saviour? Have not many of you continued unbelieving, impenitent and irreligious, even under the faithful, awakening evangelical preaching of that aged ſervant of Chriſt who will never addreſs you again, from this deſk; but who though dead, yet loudly ſpeaks to you, now for the laſt time, by this providence? If ſo it is high time ſurely to awake out of this ſleep; for in a little time, every goſpel deſpiſer will hear the tremenduous ſound, *Behold ye deſpiſers and wonder and periſh!* May God grant that none of us may receive the grace of God invain; but may all hear ſo that our ſouls may live for Chriſt's ſake, AMEN.

THE END.

7 AP 64

ERARTA.

Page 1, Line 2d. read ſtewards.
Page 10, 2d. line from the bottom, add approved.
Page 19, Line 12, After Chriſt add 's
Page 21, Line 4 from the bottom, for *my* read *may*.